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Naomi Klein

Naomi Klein (born May 8, 1970) is a Canadian author, social activist, and filmmaker known for her political analyses and criticism of corporate globalization and of capitalism.^[1] She first became known internationally for her book *No Logo* (1999); *The Take* (2004), a documentary film about Argentina's occupied factories, written by Klein and directed by her husband Avi Lewis; and significantly for *The Shock Doctrine* (2007), a critical analysis of the history of neoliberal economics that was adapted into a six-minute companion film by Alfonso and Jonás Cuarón,^[2] as well as a feature-length documentary by Michael Winterbottom.^[3]

This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate (2014) was a *New York Times* non-fiction bestseller and the winner of the Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction in its year.^[4] In 2016 Klein was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize for her activism on climate justice.^[5] Klein frequently appears on global and national lists of top influential thinkers, including the 2014 Thought Leaders ranking compiled by the Gottlieb Duttweiler Institute,^[6] *Prospect* magazine's world thinkers 2014 poll,^[7] and Maclean's 2014 Power List.^[8] She is a member of the board of directors of the climate activist group 350.org.^[9]

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Naomi Klein



Naomi Klein in 2014.

Born	May 8, 1970 Montreal, Quebec, Canada
Occupation	Author, activist
Citizenship	Canadian American
Alma mater	University of Toronto (no degree)
Period	1999–present
Genre	Non-fiction
Subject	Alter-globalization, anti-

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war, anti-capitalism,
environmentalism

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This Changes Everything, *No Logo*, *The Shock Doctrine*

Spouse

Avi Lewis

Children

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Website

naomiklein.org (<http://naomiklein.org>)

Family

Naomi Klein was born in Montreal, Quebec, and brought up in a Jewish family with a history of peace activism. Her parents were self-described "hippies"^[10] who moved to Montreal from the U.S. in 1967 as war resisters to the Vietnam War.^[11] Her mother, documentary film-maker Bonnie Sherr Klein, is best known for her anti-pornography film *Not a Love Story*.^[12] Her father, Michael Klein, is a physician and a member of Physicians for Social Responsibility. Her brother, Seth Klein, is director of the British Columbia office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Before World War II, her paternal grandparents were communists, but they began to turn against the Soviet Union after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939. In 1942, her grandfather, an animator at Disney, was fired after the 1941 strike,^[13] and went to work at a shipyard instead. By 1956 they had abandoned communism. Klein's father grew up surrounded by ideas of social justice and racial equality, but found it "difficult and frightening to be the child of Communists", a so-called red diaper baby.^[14]

Klein's husband, Avi Lewis, was born into a well-connected political and journalistic family; he works as a TV journalist and documentary filmmaker. The couple's first child, son Toma, was born on June 13, 2012.^[15]

Early life

Klein spent much of her teenage years in shopping malls, obsessed with designer labels.^[16] As a child and teenager, she found it "very oppressive to have a very public feminist mother" and she rejected politics, instead embracing "full-on consumerism".

She has attributed her change in worldview to two events. One was when she was 17 and preparing for the University of Toronto, her mother had a stroke and became severely disabled.^[17] Naomi, her father, and her brother took care of Bonnie through the period in hospital and at home, making educational sacrifices to do so.^[17] That year off prevented her "from being such a brat".^[16] The next year, after beginning her studies at the University of Toronto, the second event occurred: the 1989 École Polytechnique massacre of female engineering students, which proved to be a wake-up call to feminism.^[18]

Klein's writing career began with contributions to *The Varsity*, a student newspaper, where she served as editor-in-chief. After her third year at the University of Toronto, she dropped out of university to take a job at *The Globe and Mail*, followed by an editorship at *This Magazine*. In 1995, she returned to the University of Toronto with the intention of finishing her degree^[14] but left academia for a journalism internship before acquiring the final credits required to complete her degree.^[19]

Works

No Logo

In 1999, Klein published the book *No Logo*, which for many became a manifesto of the anti-globalization movement. In it, she attacks brand-oriented consumer culture and the operations of large corporations. She also accuses several such corporations of unethically exploiting workers in the world's poorest countries in pursuit of greater profits. In this book, Klein criticized Nike so severely that Nike published a point-by-point response.^[20] *No Logo* became an international bestseller, selling over one million copies in over 28 languages.^[21]

Fences and Windows

Klein's *Fences and Windows* (2002) is a collection of her articles and speeches written on behalf of the anti-globalization movement (all proceeds from the book go to benefit activist organizations through The Fences and Windows Fund).

The Take

Klein and her husband, Avi Lewis made a documentary film called *The Take* (2004) about factory workers in Argentina who took over a closed plant and resumed production, operating as a collective. The first African screening was in the Kennedy Road shack settlement in the South African city of Durban, where the Abahlali baseMjondolo movement began.^[22]

An article in *Z Communications* criticized *The Take* for its portrayal of the Argentine general and politician Juan Domingo Perón arguing that he was falsely portrayed as a social democrat.^[23]



Klein speaking in 2002

The Shock Doctrine

Klein's third book, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, was published on September 4, 2007. The book argues that the free market policies of Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman and the Chicago School of Economics have risen to prominence in countries such as Chile, under Pinochet, Poland, Russia, under Yeltsin. The book also argues that policy initiatives (for instance, the privatization of Iraq's economy under the Coalition Provisional Authority) were rushed

through while the citizens of these countries were in shock from disasters, upheavals, or invasion. The book became an international and New York Times bestseller^[21] translated into 28 languages.^[24]

Central to the book's thesis is the contention that those who wish to implement unpopular free market policies now routinely do so by taking advantage of certain features of the aftermath of major disasters, be they economic, political, military or natural. The suggestion is that when a society experiences a major 'shock' there is a widespread desire for a rapid and decisive response to correct the situation; this desire for bold and immediate action provides an opportunity for unscrupulous actors to implement policies which go far beyond a legitimate response to disaster. The book suggests that when the rush to act means the specifics of a response will go unscrutinized, that is the moment when unpopular and unrelated policies will intentionally be rushed into effect. The book appears to claim that these shocks are in some cases intentionally encouraged or even manufactured.

Klein identifies the "shock doctrine", elaborating on Joseph Schumpeter, as the latest in capitalism's phases of "creative destruction".^[25]

The Shock Doctrine was adapted into a short film of the same name, released onto YouTube.^[26] The original is no longer available on the site, however, a duplicate was published in 2008.^[27] The film was directed by Jonás Cuarón, produced and co-written by his father Alfonso Cuarón. The original video was viewed over one million times.^[21]

The publication of *The Shock Doctrine* increased Klein's prominence, with the New Yorker judging her "the most visible and influential figure on the American left—what Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky were thirty years ago." On February 24, 2009, the book was awarded the inaugural Warwick Prize for Writing from the University of Warwick in England. The prize carried a cash award of £50,000.

This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate

Klein's fourth book, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* was published in September 2014.^[28] The book puts forth the argument that the hegemony of neoliberal market fundamentalism is blocking any serious reforms to halt climate change and protect the environment.^[29] Questioned about Klein's claim that capitalism and controlling climate change were incompatible, Benoit Blarel, manager of the Environment and Natural Resources global practice at the World Bank, said that the write-off of fossil fuels necessary to control climate change "will have a huge impact all over" and that the World Bank was "starting work on this".^[30] The book won the 2014 Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction,^[31] and was a shortlisted nominee for the 2015 Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing.^[32]

No Is Not Enough: Resisting Trump's Shock Politics and Winning the World We Need

Klein's fifth book, *No Is Not Enough: Resisting Trump's Shock Politics and Winning the World We Need* was published in June 2017. It has also been published Internationally with the alternative subtitle *Defeating the New Shock Politics*.^[33]



Klein in 2008 with the Polish edition of *Shock Doctrine*

Iraq War criticism

Klein has written on various current issues, such as the [Iraq War](#). In a September 2004 article for *Harper's Magazine*,^[34] she argues that, contrary to popular belief, the [Bush administration](#) did have a clear plan for post-invasion Iraq, which was to build a completely unconstrained [free market economy](#). She describes plans to allow foreigners to extract wealth from Iraq, and the methods used to achieve those goals.^{[35][36]} The film *War, Inc.* (2008) was partially inspired by her article, "Baghdad Year Zero".^[37]

Klein's August 2004 "Bring Najaf to New York", published in *The Nation*, argued that [Muqtada Al Sadr's Mahdi Army](#) "represents the overwhelmingly mainstream sentiment in Iraq."^[38] She went on to say "Yes, if elected Sadr would try to turn Iraq into a [theocracy](#) like Iran, but for now his demands are for direct elections and an end to foreign occupation".^[38] [Marc Cooper](#), a former *Nation* columnist, attacked the assertion that Al Sadr represented mainstream Iraqi sentiment and that American forces had brought the fight to the holy city of [Najaf](#).^[39] Cooper wrote that "Klein should know better. All enemies of the U.S. occupation she opposes are not her friends. Or ours. Or those of the Iraqi people. I don't think that Mullah Al Sadr, in any case, is much desirous of support issuing from secular Jewish feminist-socialists."^[39]

Venezuela

Klein signed a 2004 petition entitled, "We would vote for Hugo Chavez."^[40] In 2007 she described Venezuela under the Chávez government as a country where "citizens had renewed their faith in the power of democracy to improve their lives," and described Venezuela as a place sheltered by Chávez's policies from the economic shocks produced by capitalism.^[41] Rather, according to Klein, Chávez protected his country from financial crisis by building "a zone of relative economic calm and predictability."^{[41][42]} According to reviewer [Todd Gitlin](#), who described the overall argument of Klein's 2007 book, *The Shock Doctrine*, as, "more right than wrong," Klein is "a romantic," who expected that the Chávez government would produce a bright future in which worker-controlled co-operatives would run the economy.^[43] *The Shock Doctrine* was consistent with her prior thinking about [globalization](#), and in that book she describes Chávez' policies as an example of public control of some sectors of the economy as protecting poor people from harm caused by globalization.^[44] After the collapse of the Venezuelan economy and erosion of its democratic institutions under Chávez' successor [Nicolás Maduro](#), Klein and other people who had supported Chávez were criticized by neoconservatives [James Kirchick](#)^[45] and by [Mark Milke](#).^[46]

Criticism of Israel

In March 2008, Klein was the keynote speaker at the first national conference of the [Alliance of Concerned Jewish Canadians](#). In January 2009, during the [Gaza War](#), Klein supported the [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions](#) (BDS) campaign against [Israel](#), arguing that "the best strategy to end the increasingly bloody occupation is for Israel to become the target of the kind of global movement that put an end to apartheid in South Africa."^[47]

In summer 2009, on the occasion of the publication of the [Hebrew](#) translation of her book *The Shock Doctrine*, Klein visited Israel, the [West Bank](#), and [Gaza](#), combining the promotion of her book and the BDS campaign. In an interview to the Israeli newspaper [Haaretz](#) she emphasized that it is important to her "not to boycott Israelis but rather to boycott the normalization of Israel and the conflict."^[48] In a speech in [Ramallah](#) on June 27, she apologized to the [Palestinians](#) for not

joining the BDS campaign earlier.^[49] Her remarks, particularly that "[Some Jews] even think we get one get-away-with-genocide-free card" were characterized by Noam Schimmel, an op-ed columnist in *The Jerusalem Post*, as "violent" and "unethical", and as the "most perverse of aspersions on Jews, an age-old stereotype of Jews as intrinsically evil and malicious."^[50]

Klein was also a spokesperson for the protest against the spotlight on Tel Aviv at the 2009 Toronto International Film Festival, a spotlight that Klein said was a very selective and misleading portrait of Israel.^[51]

Environmentalism



2015

Since 2009, Klein's attention has turned to environmentalism, with particular focus on climate change, the subject of her book *This Changes Everything* (2014).^[53] According to her website, the book and its accompanying film (released in 2015) will be about "how the climate crisis can spur economic and political transformation."^[54] She sits on the board of directors of campaign group 350.org^[55] and took part in their "Do the Math" tour in 2013, encouraging a divestment movement.^[56]

She has encouraged the Occupy movement to join forces with the environmental movement, saying the financial crisis and the climate crisis have the same root—unrestrained corporate greed.^[57] She gave a speech at Occupy Wall Street where she described the world as "upside down", where we act as if "there is no end to what is actually finite—

fossil fuels and the atmospheric space to absorb their emissions," and as if there are "limits to what is actually bountiful—the financial resources to build the kind of society we need."^[58]

She has been a particularly vocal critic of the Athabasca oil sands in Alberta, describing it in a TED talk as a form of "terrestrial skinning."^[59] On September 2, 2011, she attended the demonstration against the Keystone XL pipeline outside the White House and was arrested.^[60] Klein celebrated Obama's decision to postpone a decision on the Keystone pipeline until 2013 pending an environmental review as a victory for the environmental movement.^[57]

She attended the Copenhagen Climate Summit of 2009. She put the blame for the failure of Copenhagen on Barack Obama,^[61] and described her own country, Canada, as a "climate criminal."^[62] She presented the Angry Mermaid Award (a satirical award designed to recognise the corporations who have best sabotaged the climate negotiations) to Monsanto.^[63]

Writing in the wake of Hurricane Sandy she warned that the climate crisis constitutes a massive opportunity for disaster capitalists and corporations seeking to profit from crisis. But equally, the climate crisis "can be a historic moment to usher in the next great wave of progressive change," or a so-called "People's Shock."^[64]

Indeed the three policy pillars of the neoliberal age—privatization of the public sphere, deregulation of the corporate sector, and the lowering of income and corporate taxes, paid for with cuts to public spending—are each incompatible with many of the actions we must take to bring our emissions to safe levels. And together these pillars form an ideological wall that has blocked a serious response to climate change for decades.

— Naomi Klein^[52]

On November 9, 2016, following the election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States, Klein called for an international campaign to impose economic sanctions on the United States if his administration refuses to abide by the terms of the [Paris Agreement](#).^[65]

Other activities

Klein contributes to [The Nation](#), [In These Times](#), [The Globe and Mail](#), [This Magazine](#), [Harper's Magazine](#), and [The Guardian](#), and is a senior contributor for [The Intercept](#).^[66] She is a former Miliband Fellow and lectured at the [London School of Economics](#) on the anti-globalization movement.^[67] In 2004, Klein endorsed [Hugo Chávez](#) in Venezuelan presidential election.^[68]

Klein ranked 11th in an internet poll of the [top global intellectuals of 2005](#), a list of the world's top 100 public intellectuals compiled by the [Prospect](#) magazine in conjunction with [Foreign Policy](#) magazine.^[69] She was involved in [2010 G-20 Toronto summit protests](#), condemning police force and brutality. She spoke to a rally seeking the release of protesters in front of police headquarters on June 28, 2010.^[70]

In May 2011, Klein received an honorary degree from [Saint Thomas University](#).^[71] On October 6, 2011, she visited [Occupy Wall Street](#) and gave a speech declaring the protest movement "the most important thing in the world".^[72] On November 10, 2011, she participated in a panel discussion about the future of Occupy Wall Street with four other panelists, including [Michael Moore](#), [William Greider](#), and [Rinku Sen](#), in which she stressed the crucial nature of the evolving movement.^[73] Klein also made an appearance in the British radio show [Desert Island Discs](#) on BBC Radio 4 in 2017.^[74] In November 2017, the [Democracy in Europe Movement 2025](#) announced that Klein had been appointed to their Advisory Panel.^[75]



Klein speaking at Occupy Wall Street in 2011

List of works

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- — (October 2002). [Fences and Windows: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Globalization Debate](#). Vintage Canada and Picador. ISBN 0-312-42143-5. OCLC 50681860 (<https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/50681860>).
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- — (September 2014). [This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate](#). Simon & Schuster. ISBN 1-451-69738-4.
- — (June 2017). [No Is Not Enough: Resisting Trump's Shock Politics and Winning the World We Need](#). Haymarket Books. ISBN 1-608-46890-9.

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- (September 2004). "Baghdad year zero: Pillaging Iraq in pursuit of a neocon utopia" (<http://harpers.org/archive/2004/09/0080197>). *Harper's Magazine*. New York City: 43–53. ISSN 0017-789X (<https://www.worldcat.org/issn/0017-789X>).
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Filmography

- *The Corporation* (2003) (interviewee)
- *The Take* (2004) (writer)
- *The Shock Doctrine* (2009) (writer)
- *Catastroika* (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2385027/?ref_=nv_sr_1) (2012) (appearance)
- *This Changes Everything* (2015)

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External links

- Official website (<http://naomiklein.org>)
- Naomi Klein (https://www.ted.com/speakers/naomi_klein) at TED 
- Appearances (<https://www.c-span.org/person/?naomiklein>) on C-SPAN
- Naomi Klein (<https://charlieroose.com/videos/11361>) on *Charlie Rose* (and others (<https://charlieroose.com/search-results/?query=Naomi%20Klein>))
- Naomi Klein (<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1468859/>) on IMDb
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This page was last edited on 21 May 2018, at 11:53.

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